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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**BEFORE THE**

**Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings  
and Emergency Management  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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## **Introduction**

I am Mr. Steven L. Stockton, Deputy Director of Civil Works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I am a registered Professional Engineer in the state of Oregon. I am pleased to be here today and to have the opportunity to speak to you about the Proposed Amendments and Reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program Act. My testimony today will provide a brief discussion of the benefits of the program, the need for reauthorization, and the proposed reforms to the National Dam Safety Program.

## **Benefits of the Program**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates a large number of dams in the United States and we have been active in promoting dam safety for many years. The Corps was a member of the ad-hoc committee that wrote the "Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety" in 1979 after dam failures occurred earlier in the 1970's. Since that time the Corps has been active in the activities of the Interagency Committee on Dam Safety (ICODS) and also on the National Dam Safety Review Board (NDSRB), which was established in 1997. The NDSRB has been meeting regularly and is active in the development of joint Federal and state dam safety policies and training.

The National Dam Safety Program provides benefits to the nation by reducing risks to life and property from dam failure in the United States through an effective dam safety program that brings together the expertise and resources of the Federal and non-Federal communities in achieving dam safety hazard reduction. These benefits are being achieved through the publication of various technical guidelines for the dam owner; through training dam safety professionals in Federal and state government on inspection and evaluation of dams; through cooperative dam safety research; and through publication of the National Inventory of Dams. The National Dam Safety Program has allowed the Corps to leverage its resources through work with other Federal agencies and with the various states. The Program has improved state dam safety programs by providing a forum for the states to share information. The National Inventory of Dams lists over 80,000 dams in the United States. By having the Inventory on the Internet, some of the states have estimated that the Inventory has avoided the expenditure for one-half man-year over answering individual questions concerning dams within the state.

Since the current version of the National Dam Safety Act expires at the end of Fiscal Year 2006, in order for the Nation to continue to realize the benefits to the nation of the Program, reauthorization would be required. Work groups under the NDSRB are currently engaged in research to improve the safety of dams and in the development of additional technical guidelines for dam owners. Since most of the 80,000 dams in the United States are owned by private companies and individuals, the National Dam Safety Program provides a single point of access for dam safety information. The Corps of Engineers believes that the cost of providing dam safety for dams operated by the Corps is reduced as a result of Corps participation and cooperation in programs such as the National Dam Safety Program.

#### Proposed Reforms to the Program

Most of the proposed amendments to the National Dam Safety Program Act are administrative in nature. However, there are two amendments that are making substantial changes to the program. These amendments are (1) the addition of an assessment of each dam based on inspections completed by either a Federal agency or a state dam safety agency to the National Inventory of Dams and (2) the extension of the authorization for appropriations.

The addition of an assessment of each dam to the inventory will enhance the value of the inventory when used by various emergency agencies and local governments during times of natural disasters. The assessments will allow the first responders to focus their actions where dam failures are most likely to occur. This will save time and possibly lives in emergency situations. In addition, these assessments will provide information that can assist local governments, public utilities, and private individuals when making investment decisions concerning property protected by the dams.

If the proposed legislation is enacted in its current version, authorization of appropriations for the National Inventory of Dams would increase from \$500,000 per

fiscal year to \$1,000,000 per fiscal year to accomplish the addition of the assessments to the inventory. The additional authorization in the Act is to develop and deploy the new data fields in the inventory. This work will include design of the metrics and standards for how inspection/assessment information is gathered and portrayed, and then actually assisting states and Federal agencies in the collection and population of the database.

The current version of the proposed legislation also calls for the Program appropriations to be increased to allow the program to continue at the present level and to improve the ability of the NDSRB to evaluate the performance of the state dam safety programs.

We are committed to continuing to improve the safety of Federal dams; continuing to cooperate with the other Federal agencies and the states to reduce the risk to public safety in areas located below dams; continuing to help decision makers set priorities for future dam safety investments; and continuing to ensure that all Americans can make more informed decisions on building homes, locating businesses, and purchasing flood insurance based on the actual risk of flood and storm damages where they live.

This concludes my statement. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.